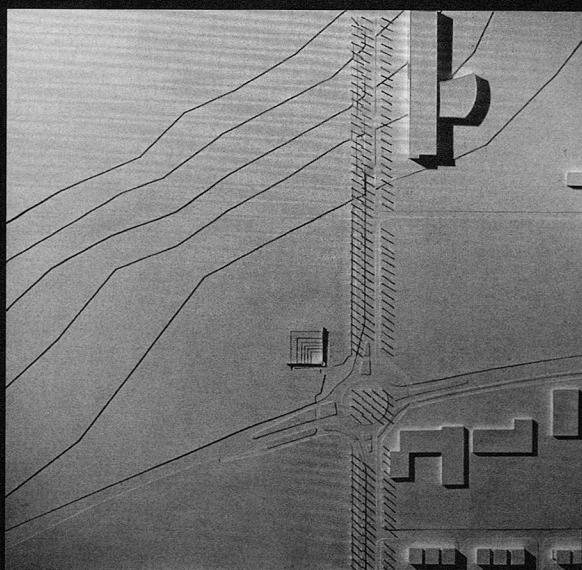
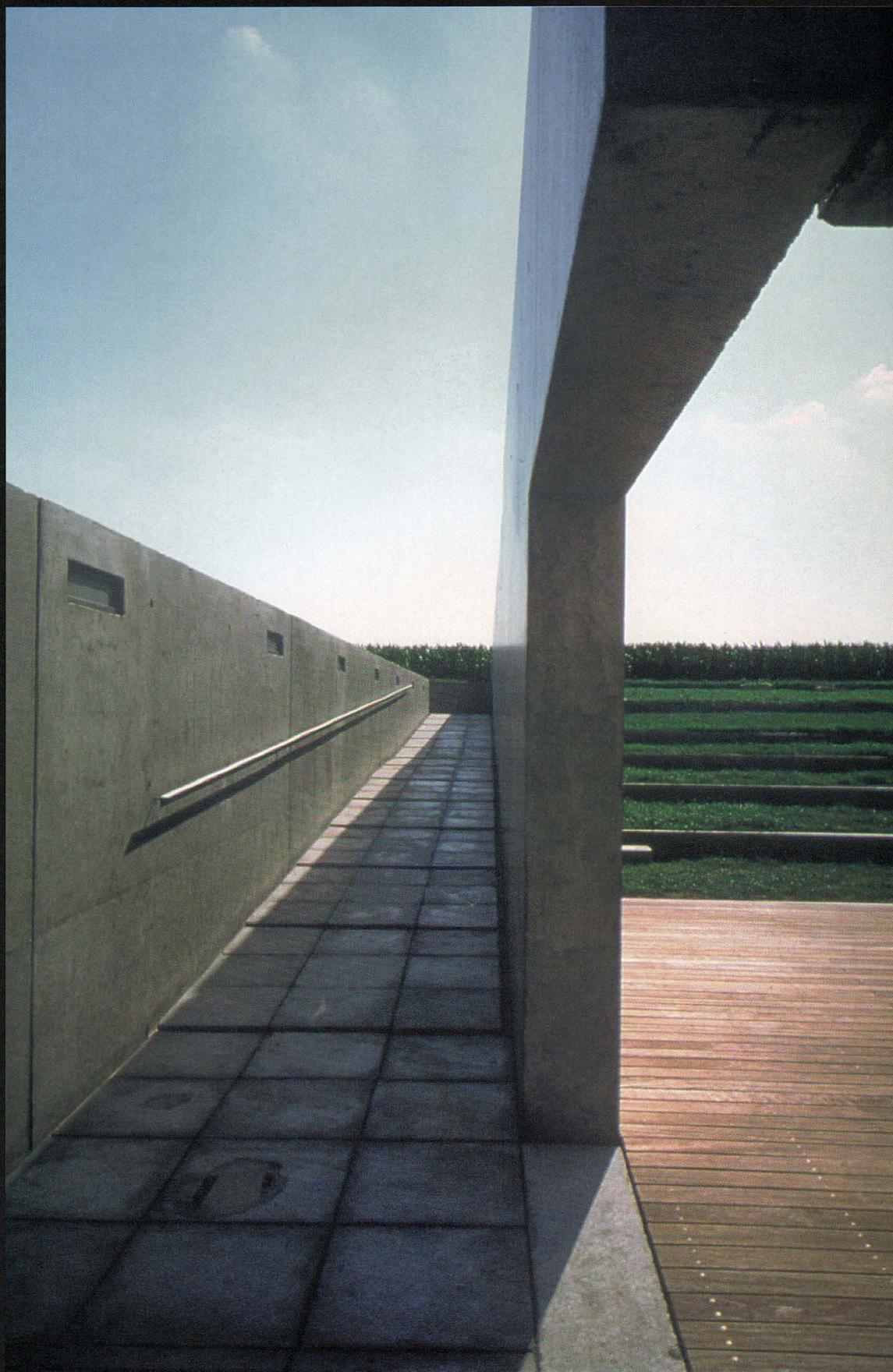


## Peace and Memory Monument

*Dominique Jakob and Brendan MacFarlane*





The idea of a peace monument emerged as a reaction by the town council to the original proposition to make a war monument. France is filled with war monuments. In contrast, this project became a rare opportunity to build a monument to peace.

The project is also referred to as a Memory Monument in response to the brief by the town to represent the forty-nine nationalities present in the town, many of whom emigrated to France to escape conflicts in their own countries.

Thus given the general issues, we posed the question, how does one monumentalize peace? Something that in this project was not specific to a particular time or even place. Furthermore, how does one do the same with memory? Both are equally intangible. Does one create a particular narrative, taking a known or invented symbol for example? Or does one confine the project to a much more reduced and neutral proposition?

Knowing the non-particularity of the project brief, we felt the best way to create something that could invoke thoughts on peace and memory was to propose a place that was general and all encompassing while still being capable of holding and cherishing the particular thoughts of any individual who visits this place. It may sound strange but we both felt that through a process of imagining all of the stories and personal dramas that each individual may bring to the monument, we created the kind of atmosphere that we feel the monument has today. An atmosphere that gives the place a deeper sense than that which is visually noticeable. The language is quite neutral, not wanting to be part of something 'designed' for its own sake, but instead designing only what is necessary. We attempted to eliminate anything that would be interpreted as surplus, trying to place the emphasis on what one feels in this place more than what one sees.

The monument was conceived as a space dug into the landscape for the following reasons. We were aware of the two distinct sides to the site, one facing a busy intersection, and the other bordering a large field of corn, which, while in season, extends to a nearby forests. This side will remain as protected green space in the future. We wanted to create a design that would slowly concentrate the view of the person entering the monument. Passing through a series of visual transitions from the space of the automobile on the outside to more intimate and framed views of the field, forest, and sky with its changing cloud formations. We intended for the interior space to be silent and visually disconnected from the town.

We did not create a particular program for the individual to experience, but instead, a space that can be appropriated and interpreted in many different ways. We have often been asked, 'why the simple geometry?' Our response has always been that we wanted to stay within formal moves that were as simple as possible and reasonably neutral, in order to reveal qualities that can either be interpreted by an individual or those that the site already possesses; the sound of one's steps descending the ramp beside the wall, or the movement of a wind across the field. The inner portion of the monument was conceived as a space capable of holding up to 400 people; sitting on its gently sloping steps listening to music, a reading, etc.

Shortly before we began construction on the monument, Elie Wiesel was asked to write a phrase that would be inscribed into the wall of one of the entry ramps. He wrote: "bouclier contre la laideur de la haine et l'absurdité de la guerre, la mémoire, seule, permet aux hommes d'espérer." Translated to English: "shielded against the heaviness of hate and the absurdity of war, memory, alone, allows man hope."

